

CASE STUDY



SAMPLE LEGAL CASE OF PLAGIARISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

EXAMPLE 1

During the lead-up to the US presidential election, the first lady to-be Melania Trump took criticism for delivering a speech that had a lot of similarities to one from first lady Michelle Obama.

In 2008, [Michelle Obama said](#) in a speech:



Barack and I were raised with so many of the same values, that you work hard for what you want in life, that your word is your bond and you do what you say you're going to do," "And Barack and I set out to build lives guided by these values, and pass them on to the next generation. Because we want our children – and all children in this nation – to know that the only limit to the height of your achievements is the reach of your dreams and your willingness to work for them.



At the 2016 Republican National Convention, Melania Trump said the following:



From a young age, my parents impressed on me the values that you work hard for what you want in life, that your word is your bond and you do what you say and keep your promise. "That you treat people with respect. They taught and showed me values and morals in their daily life. That is a lesson that I continue to pass along to our son, and we need to pass those lessons on to the many generations to follow, because we want our children in this nation to know that the only limit to your achievements is the strength of your dreams and your willingness to work for them."



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The message within those 2 paragraphs is essentially the same, but the bigger problem is over half of this portion of Trump's speech is directly copied from Obama's speech. Large sections of words, terms, and sentence structure are identical. While it did create a stir in the media, the scandal didn't prevent Donald Trump from winning the election.

All political stuff aside, plagiarism in a high profile situation like this could result in a heap of trouble: speakers may be embarrassed, writers could get fired. The people giving the speech may find their reputation is ruined or that their expertise and abilities are questioned.

EXAMPLE 2

Jayson Blair was a reporter for the New York Times in the early 2000s. At one point, he wrote a series of stories about military families but much of what he wrote was either plagiarized from other sources, or he simply made up quotes and other details to support his stories.

In 2003, the scandal forced Blair to resign in shame, and the New York Times published a long report detailing everything that happened and how. It also led to the resignation of two senior editors. Blair's actions destroyed his reputation, but it also affected the reputation of the New York Times and professional journalism in general.

Blair regrets having destroyed the trust many readers had in journalism, but knows he can never go back. "Once you've done something that leads people to question your trust, your effectiveness in the field becomes limited. You don't have the right to go back."